



Associated Neurologists, P.C.

Danbury • Waterbury • New Milford, CT

Associated Neurologists'
"The NeuroTransmitter" Newsletter
Spring Edition, March 2016

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(L to R, Top Row to Bottom Row): Drs. Robert Bonwetsch, Neil Culligan, David Greco, Behzad Habibi, Samuel Markind, Jan Mashman, Diane Wirz, Charles Guardia III, William Yorns Jr.)

Brain Awareness Week 2016

Did you know that every March, ***Brain Awareness Week*** unites the efforts of people of all ages and organizations across the world in celebration of the brain? This year's 21st annual Brain Awareness Week took place March 14th - 20th as a global campaign to increase awareness on the progress and benefits of ongoing brain research. We're bringing the celebration to you through this issue of our newsletter, providing information on research findings by neurologists and neuroscientists that may help to enhance brain health and quality of life. Our Spring issue includes:

- **Important tips for helping to maintain a healthy brain**
- **Information on clinical trials at our practice with medications** that may help to improve memory or slow disease progression in patients with Alzheimer's

disease

- An introduction to "SilverSneakers," a special health program that is specifically geared toward people 65 years of age and older to help keep seniors healthy physically, mentally, and emotionally



Steps to Help Maintain Brain Health as You Age

We know that aging well depends on several factors, including genetic makeup, environment, and lifestyle. Importantly, making healthful lifestyle choices **today** may not only make a difference in helping you to maintain overall physical health, but plays an important role in your brain health as well.

First, it's important to keep in mind that potential risks to your brain health may include:

- Smoking
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Use or misuse of certain medications
- Poor diet
- Lack of or insufficient physical activity
- Insufficient sleep
- Lack of social engagement, spending much time being alone
- Diabetes, high blood pressure (hypertension), heart disease, obesity, depression, and/or other chronic health problems

Fortunately, research has found that making the following lifestyle choices serves to support brain health and may decrease the risk or delay the onset of dementia:

- **If you are a smoker, it's important that you quit** to lower your risk of stroke, lung diseases, coronary artery disease, and diabetes, all of which can be associated with an increased risk of dementia. There are several free resources available to help you quit smoking located at the website [Smokefree.gov](https://www.smokefree.gov), which provides evidence-based information and professional assistance to help support the immediate and long-term needs of people who are trying to quit smoking.



- **If you consume alcohol, do so in moderation.** After having just one or two drinks, people may have slowed reaction times, difficulty walking, slurred speech, and memory impairment, which rapidly resolve when alcohol consumption stops. However, those who consume alcohol heavily over long periods may develop long-term brain deficits that remain even after obtaining sobriety. In addition, it's crucial to note that some medications can be dangerous when taken with alcohol.
- **Speak with your healthcare providers about your medications** and whether they may cause side effects impacting memory, brain function, or sleep. In elderly patients, drug side effects are often more pronounced due to several factors, including slowed rate of elimination from the body, increased sensitivity to medication effects, and simultaneous use of multiple medications for one or more chronic conditions. Many prescribed medications or medication combinations may cause cognitive impairment that may be reversible by changing to an alternative or stopping the medication.
- **Eat a nutritious diet** rich in colorful vegetables and fruits, whole grains, and omega-3-rich nuts and fish. Also remember the importance of appropriate portion sizes and adequate fluids.
- **Be sufficiently physically active.** Physical activity promotes blood circulation to the brain; reduces your risk of stroke, heart disease, high cholesterol, hypertension, diabetes, and depression; and helps to prevent falls. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), adults both above and below the age of 65 years should get at least 150 minutes of exercise throughout the week. Patients with certain health conditions and/or those who have not been physically active may need to take extra precautions and should check with their healthcare providers before engaging in an exercise program and attempting to achieve recommended physical activity levels.
- **Reduce stress**, such as through meditation or relaxation.
- **Keep your mind active** by learning new skills, changing your routine to engage your brain in different ways, reading, and participating in other mentally stimulating activities. Although clinical trials have not shown that participating in such activities prevents Alzheimer's disease, they are enjoyable and may play a role in ensuring that people remain socially active (see directly below), which has been associated with reduced risk of certain health conditions including dementia.
- **Be socially connected.** Remain engaged in social interactions, such as



through meaningful work or volunteering, getting together with friends and family, and joining community programs.

- **Take appropriate measures to reduce your risk of chronic health conditions**, such as heart disease, hypertension, high cholesterol, and diabetes, that may result in stroke and vascular changes that may lead to dementia. As discussed above, such measures include eating a nutritious diet, maintaining a healthy weight, keeping physically active, limiting your use of alcohol, and quitting smoking.



- **If you are receiving insufficient sleep**, consider undergoing sleep testing to rule out any sleep disorders such as sleep apnea, which is characterized by pauses in breathing or instances of shallow breathing during sleep. Sleep apnea can increase risk of stroke, hypertension, and other conditions that all can

impact brain health. If you are diagnosed with sleep apnea, treatment may begin with many of the lifestyle changes we have discussed here, including losing weight, avoiding alcohol, and stopping smoking. In addition, your healthcare providers may order special equipment, such as custom-fit mouth pieces or breathing devices (e.g., use of a CPAP [continuous positive airway pressure] machine) to help with your sleep apnea.

- **As we age, we also have increased risk for falls that may lead to brain injury; therefore, take precautions that may prevent falls**, including making your home safer (e.g., removing throw rugs and other tripping hazards), exercising to improve your coordination and balance, reviewing your medications with your physicians, having your vision checked, ensuring that you're getting sufficient sleep, wearing safety belts, and considering taking a fall prevention class.

Clinical Trials for Patients with Mild Cognitive Impairment or Alzheimer's Disease

At Associated Neurologists, our [Clinical Research department](#) has participated in multiple clinical trials of novel agents for the treatment of patients with mild, moderate, or severe Alzheimer's disease. Currently, we are enrolling trials for patients with prodromal or mild to moderate [Alzheimer's disease](#) (AD). In cases of prodromal AD, memory has declined more than can be attributed to normal aging alone, yet not enough to diagnosis AD.

Our currently enrolling trials include a [study](#) on a novel agent that may slow the progression of AD symptoms, helping to improve memory and enabling patients to function better (i.e., symptomatic therapy), and a [second study](#) on an investigational agent to assess whether it is safe and effective in actually slowing disease progression in patients with prodromal or mild AD (i.e., as a disease-modifying agent).



Such AD studies require caregivers and/or close relatives who can accompany patients and who may provide feedback on how the patient is doing during certain study visits.

[Click HERE to learn more about the above trials as well as additional studies being conducted at Associated Neurologists](#), and please contact our Clinical Research Department at (203) 748-2551, extension 351 for further information.

Frequently Asked Questions

If you are interested in learning more about clinical trials overall, what questions interested patients and caregivers should ask, and why clinical trials are important, be sure to visit our [Clinical Trial Online Resource!](#)

Join the SilverSneakers Movement with Us at the Medical Fitness Center!

Did you know that [SilverSneakers](#) is our country's leading exercise and fitness program for active older adults aged 65 years and older?



Joining the SilverSneakers movement may help you to lose weight, become more physically fit, enhance your energy level, and improve your overall well-being, all of which play an important part in healthy aging and maintaining brain health.

This adult wellness program is an insurance benefit that is included in many Medicare and group retiree plans nationwide.

We're therefore so pleased to announce that Associated Neurologists' [Medical Fitness Center](#) is now accepting SilverSneakers members! Be sure to take advantage of our gym's cardio and strengthening equipment by using your SilverSneakers card. Call us at (203) 748-2551 ext. 364 if you have any questions, or you can stop by Suite 204 to sign up today!

Associated Neurologists strongly recommends that care and treatment decisions related to any medical condition be made only in consultation with a patient's physician and other qualified medical professionals. The information found in this Newsletter, on the Web site, and on our Facebook Page, Pinterest, and Twitter is intended to provide general information only. The presence of links in the Newsletter, on the Web site, and on our social media channels does not signify an endorsement, and Associated Neurologists is not responsible for any information found on other Web sites.

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